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Medical Marijuana Testimony

From: State Representative Penny Bacchiochi

November 28, 2006

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Representative Penny Bacchiochi
Testimony
November 28, 2006

RE: MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Good Morning Chairman Drolet and esteemed members of the this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning on a bill that is important to me, and to many Michigan residents. While I am a member of the Connecticut General Assembly, I am here today because of my personal interest in effective medical marijuana legislation.

I had a personal experience almost 25 years ago that prompted me to become involved in the efforts across this country to legalize marijuana for medical use. When I was married in 1982 - my husband was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer, specifically Ewing's Sarcoma. Ewing's Sarcoma is a debilitating bone cancer that has a very low survival rate. While my husband was given a year to live, he defied the odds and lived 14 years after his diagnosis.

Many of those years were horrible. Initially, he underwent radical surgery on his spine to remove a tumor. That surgery left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. The surgery was followed up with radiation and chemotherapy that caused him to lose 80 pounds. He not only had to face a terminal diagnosis, he had to face severe treatments and their side effects, which included nausea, muscle spasms and chronic pain.

While the doctors prescribed numerous pain and anti-nausea medications, none of them provided relief. It wasn't until a doctor at the Boston Veteran's Hospital pulled me aside and suggested marijuana that either of us considered this a resource. I can tell you that I was fully aware that marijuana was illegal, I was aware of the consequences I faced, and I was afraid.

But when you are desperate for relief, as we were, you are willing to try anything. At great risk to myself, I purchased pot for my husband.

I bought marijuana and my husband smoked marijuana, and it worked. He regained a quality of life, he was able to eat and regain strength, and he had some control over his "medications" The change was dramatic and life giving.

So when some of my colleagues in the Connecticut legislature tell me that marijuana is a hoax, I have to encourage them to be open-minded and listen to my experience, and the experiences of others.

I know that my experience is an extreme example and an extraordinary set of circumstances. But thousands of Michigan residents are undergoing similar treatments and using marijuana now because they know what I know...marijuana makes them feel better. It works for people when other FDA approved drugs such as Marino do not work.

It works because you do not have to swallow pills, you can control the dosage, and you can experience immediate results.

My first hand experience with marijuana gives me confidence to say that medical marijuana legislation is needed. Passing this legislation is an act of kindness and compassion, and it allows individuals and doctors to make appropriate medical decisions.

While I know that marijuana is needed for medical relief, I can also tell you that there are thousands of documented studies to confirm its effectiveness. There is scientific and imperial data to support the effectiveness of marijuana. Many medical associations support the passage of this bill, as do thousands of doctors and nurses.

I know that each of you have access to all of the research, all of the claims and counter claims, and all of the history. I am here only to tell you that in my little corner of Connecticut, in one small town, I watched marijuana give life back – to somebody I loved. I hope that none of you are ever in my shoes. But I ask you... a question I have asked many people, would you have done the same thing? Usually, the answer is yes.

Please support legislation that will allow sick and dying people who use marijuana for medical reasons to stay out of jail.
Thank you.